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SUBJECT: KOSOVO WEEKLY: MORE OF THE SAME FROM BELGRADE

REF: BELGRADE 1298

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#### Summary

11. (SBU) Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic and Kosovo Minister Slobodan Samardzic attended Troika-led discussions in London, bringing little new to the table or to the discussion back at home. The President and Prime Minister announced their participation in the next round of discussions to take place in New York, September 28. Government officials rejected Pristina's proposed "good neighbor" agreement and the possibility of independence for Kosovo, in the near future, particularly by way of a unilateral declaration of independence. PM Kostunica reiterated the Democratic Party of Serbia's position on autonomy for Kosovo. In New York, we expect, the PM will go to town, exploiting the symbolism of the UN -- the arbiter of Kosovo's future. End summary.

#### No to Good Neighbors

12. (U) Serbian officials showed disdain in response to the Pristina's negotiating team's "good neighbor" proposal of measures to build civility between Serbia and Kosovo. Jeremic told reporters in London on September 18 that the GOS did not see the future relationship between Serbia and Kosovo as a relationship between two independent states. Samardzic called upon the Troika to reject the proposal because it was outside the agenda of the talks and would undermine the negotiations. In a speech to the board of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) on September 19, PM Kostunica reiterated that the party could not allow the creation of a second Albanian state on Serbian territory but that Serbia would offer "full autonomy" for the Albanian majority in Kosovo. In the Ambassador's first meeting with the PM Kostunica, September 19, Kosovo dominated the conversation (reftel).

13. (U) FM Jeremic and Kosovo Minister Samardzic attended the Troika-facilitated discussions on Kosovo in London September 18. Samardzic announced on September 18 that the Serbian negotiating team had five main topics for discussion in the Sept 28 round of talks in New York:

- an international agreement on the status of Kosovo,
- specifics on power sharing,
- economic issues,
- Kosovo's relationship with international financial organizations and regional initiatives, and
- the role of an international presence under UN auspices through civilian and military bodies that would secure the implementation of the status decision.

#### Europe Must Help Serbia

14. (U) Jeremic told state-owned Radio-Televizija Srbije (RTS) on September 17 that Serbia should seek political and diplomatic support within the EU for a compromise solution that would lead to Kosovo status -- i.e., a long-term solution. He said Serbia had to be active on two parallel diplomatic fronts: direct talks with Pristina and other diplomatic activity to build support for continuation of the negotiations until the parties reached a compromise solution. In a speech on September 18, he warned that, if Europe allowed Kosovo to become independent, it would be tantamount to forcibly dividing Serbia, a move he said would hurt Serbia's outlook on Europe.

#### Parallel Realities

15. (U) Minister for Kosovo Samardzic told RTS television, September 20, that Serbia would count on EU's assistance to implement the GOS plan for autonomy for Kosovo. He said that he did not believe that any solution would transform Kosovo Albanians into loyal Serbian citizens and that Serbia's plan for "loose integration" would allow Serbs and Albanians to lead "parallel lives." The international community would have to assume responsibility for enforcing the solution and continue to provide security, he said, because Kosovo would remain a "hostile community" for Serbs.

#### A New Spin on Autonomy

16. (U) On September 20, Blic newspaper reported unnamed sources close to the Contact Group who suggested a Hong Kong-style arrangement for Kosovo. Laying out a state-within-a-state model, the paper described a ten-to-twenty-year plan of quasi autonomy.

#### Support from Czechs on UDI Stance

17. (U) During President Tadic's September 17 visit to Prague, Czech President Vaclav Klaus rejected the possibility of a unilateral

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declaration of Kosovo's independence as irresponsible and unconstructive and urged an agreed solution that is fair to both sides, within the Belgrade - Pristina talks. "Serbia will not recognize the independence of Kosovo," Tadic told a joint press conference on September 17 in Prague and added that Serbia would implement all legal and non-violent means to prevent such a decision.

#### Comment

18. (SBU) The GOS continues to talk about compromise solutions, putting nothing new on the table or before the public. We expect that Samardzic will make the most of the fact that the next round of discussions is on the tails of UNGA, insisting that the UN is the proper body to resolve Kosovo status. End Comment.

MUNTER